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And Beacons Burn Again



Henry Jenson

And Beacons Burn Again

LETTERS FROM AN ENGLISH SOLDIER

By HENRY JESSON

Arranged by
LEIGHTON ROLLINS



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*These letters were written by Mr.
Jesson to Mr. Rollins, Director of
The Rollins Studio of Acting, from
September 1939 to September 1940*

FOREWORD

On the 24th of September, 1939, Henry Tucket-Jesson boarded the Clipper for England. He had concluded his second year as a member of the Rolins Studio, the theatre school at East Hampton, Long Island, where he also served as a staff associate. He had come to us on the Thorndike-Woodhouse Fellowship created by myself and Dame Sybil Thorndike and Eileen Thorndike as an exchange scholarship for talented young Britishers and Americans. The Thorndikes and I have always eagerly forwarded friendships between England and America. We accordingly founded this fellowship as one more step in that cause.

Dame Sybil was playing in New York when I received from her sister the list of young men and women then under consideration for the first award. I visited Dame Sybil at her hotel, she glanced at the list and said, "Ah, but there is only one choice—Henry Jesson. He is truly talented, a gentleman, and will make friends wherever he goes for England." He is talented and he did make

countless friends for England. Henry loved America from the moment of landing. He loved most of all the theatre and quickly brought unusual, favorable attention to his marked, unfolding talents.

Henry was educated at Lancing College and at Oxford, followed by two years at The Embassy School of Acting where Eileen Thorndike served as Principal. He is heir presumptive to the Barony of Audley.

Henry, as many of us were, was a sincere and tenacious pacifist. He believed most courageously in that difficult faith. When he embarked upon the Clipper he was returning to his father, then desperately ill, and to an England at war.

He was confused by the impact of a personal grief and a world tragedy. There has come to all of us who have read these letters a sense of an inner triumph, completed by his continuous association with the rewarding and eternal comforts for one who loves and understands nature and must share his knowledge with others.

His letters have not been altered. I have merely omitted names and paragraphs dealing with personal matters. Henry did not write these letters for publication. He has had no opportunity to correct or to change one of them, as he is now a soldier and at camp. I have taken upon me the responsibility

of publishing these letters as his friends are convinced an audience is ready for the sincerity of his story, for its purpose and its power.

He has risen above the moment and shown us the life of Englishmen who believe in the creative way of life, who despise war and destruction, magnificently pouring out all they have so that yet again men may be free.

LEIGHTON ROLLINS

And Beacons Burn Again

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*Portions of a journal kept by Henry
Jesson at East Hampton, New York,
during the weeks preceding his re-
turn to England in September 1939*

Great Britain is at war and I am a citizen of England. She is apparently fighting for the ideal of freedom of thought and action—for freedom of individual reaction and thought—one of my most persistent ideals. I am profoundly against the methods of war and killing, and for peace. How do my ideals demand that I should act?

Can I believe that war, even fought for ideals, is remotely successful in achieving its purpose? So far it never has been.

I am lying under sandy cliffs beside the Atlantic Ocean today. The cliffs form a tiny bay. All that

I can hear is the rustle of the water against the rocks, and the quiet chirp of the gulls.

A tiny white yacht is drifting silently past me. My mind and body are at peace. My whole heart and being is at one with the sand and the sea and the sky. Perhaps this moment may join a host of others as an inscrutable strength in the months ahead. The world holds such moments waiting to be experienced by everyone. As we experience them we should cherish our future despairs and miseries as a means to reëxperience these other eternities. Wars and slaughter and pain and death can be surmounted.

If courage of the mind can be achieved through the experience of cowardice, then we may glory in cowardice when it courts a truer courage through its existence in the mind and heart of man.

The brilliance of blue and deeper blue has faded today into soft gray and gentle greens. Inside the house I have been writing to the tune of crackling logs and a discreet wind and the rain.

We can appreciate today with its new color and its special mood in its contrast to the vivid peacefulness of yesterday. Today makes thinking very pleasant. It encourages calculating, honest thought.

I have been fighting within myself today. It makes me realize yet again what a magnificent experience living is. If one can use every facet of the mind and body to its fullest strength, then life is a passionate, exhilarating and an exhausting process.

I demand to live fully and to use my mind to its deepest and broadest capacity. We must live along a trail of stepping stones made of ideals and uncertainties. The stone ahead must always be taking form. When can we safely leave the one we are on?

Here is my problem today: living is not easy. It is fascinating, supremely purposeful, and unassailable. I long for what is considered inhuman and impossible. I long for an endless peace and true charity towards the minds and reactions of every color and race of man in the world. I refuse to kill directly or indirectly unless I see with my own eyes, cruelty or injustice—even then how can I have the right to kill?

When I have created the emotion of killing in acting, at the moment when the passion of delight and ecstasy reached its height, and when the act was inevitable, I experienced the feeling of acute remorse. Triumph or hopelessness followed—but there has been *remorse*. Surely this experience helps me.

The history of the world is not made by wars but by the development of the creative arts. The writings which have enriched life are not military communiqués nor political or diplomatic triumphs. They are great poetry and prose. Stable philosophies and creative thoughts have survived centuries and eras and are as fresh and undeniable as the moment thousands or hundreds of years ago when they were first heard. Man will always know the work of Pasteur, Shakespeare, Shelley, Emerson, Madame Curie, El Greco. They may not know these names in 2000 years but they will be conscious of their influence.

I remember from my youngest childhood my mother's beauty and her music; the sunsets over the Welsh mountains; my first experience of the Theatre—a Birmingham Pantomime. I find it hard to remember even now my childish terrors and miseries.

I have no peace of mind today. I ask my reason to decide the true importance of duty to myself and to the achievements of my life, and the duty we believe in towards other people, our friends and parents. Should we regret any suffering we may cause by our actions or our ideas, if we are both honest and sincere in our own minds, and have

explained our actions and ideas to those other people? Have we any true duty or obligation to anyone but ourselves and our ideals? If our actions—born of our ideals—cause suffering, we must, of course, be peculiarly certain of the integrity of these ideals. If we are certain, even then is the suffering we may cause justified? I believe so. Am I strong and courageous enough to retain the faith I have in the ideals of living to do this and remain proud and joyous of living?

There is no human being that does not experience cowardice to some degree at some moment during the approach or menace of danger. When a mass of men approach danger or face death together there seems to be a nervous emotional courage which causes heroism.

Can this kind of courage be claimed by the individual? And does it achieve anything for the individual or even the mass? Wars are a test of force—a trial of power. History has proved that anything achieved by force, accomplished by the abuse of power, achieves and accomplishes nothing final—nothing worthy of human endeavor. Feats of strength, wars, demand mass courage, mass heroism; and yet only isolated personal heroisms are remembered. These heroisms are rarely acts of kill-

ing or feats of strength, but the saving of a life or lives. So far no war has had as its main purpose the saving of people's lives, the preservation of a culture, or eternal achievements. They have been waged to gain more lands, more wealth, more material possessions. They have caused death; and their gains have to be retained and guarded by force and the threat of death, by the encouragement of fear. This war too.

It is difficult to understand why the Creator of human beings has given one person the power and capacity to hurt wholly another person. The tragedy is there, when both persons are acting with beliefs and motives that to them are right and honorable. Yesterday's cable to me was unmoral—it wounded my heart—and for a while my mind. But my soul, my beliefs, and my spirit can never be hurt by any event. For even though my beliefs may hurt people they are sincere and real, and no power, pressure, or human endeavor could influence them. Sincere and honest reasoning could influence them if it could also replace my present beliefs with other ones which I was convinced were more real and truer than my own. I try to live with honesty of purpose, pureness of reason, and trueness of thought. I can no longer be influ-

enced by false senses of duty or false obligations—false values of gratitude. I owe my existence to a God, to my mother and my father. I owe to them also many of my instincts and a great deal of my behavior. I owe nothing to my parents for material protection or care. They would not have created a child if these things had been irksome to them. I owe to them and to my friends—my true friends and many casual friends—much of my happiness for companionship and union in the appreciation of beauty. My parents owe to me their joy at my first steps, my childhood innocence, my faith in them and acceptance of their word. They owe to me the comfort of watching their own youth becoming a prolonged reality in my youth. They owe me for their pride in any way in which I may have fulfilled them in my behavior and achievement. To each other we owe respect and trust in the other's beliefs, and honesty of spirit. We may not agree, understand, nor condone, but respect we do owe.

To myself I owe most of all. For what I owe to myself and to the fulfilment of the gift of living, I owe to God.

Through the thoughtfulness and sweetness of one of my dearest friends I can fly to Europe on

Saturday on the "Clipper." It has already given me profounder peace of mind—for I can reach my father by Monday or Tuesday—and it has placed in my palm a thrilling adventure—I have worked hard these last three days and tonight I am very weary—I shan't write any more except to record that I realize daily more completely what comfort and lasting support I have in my friends here.

American Clipper,
September 23, 1939

This is the third greatest experience of my life. I wondered how long you all watched the Clipper taxi out over that light, glaring water. It went out about two miles. I wondered whether you could see great fountains of water flowing off the bows as the engines began to race, and then I wondered how clearly you could see the ease with which we left the water and circled up and up. We came back to the airport to salute you, then away, so many miles away.

I had such wonderful messages from all the people in the world that I care most for. From you I got exactly what I needed, and then from Mrs. H—, M—, Mrs. R—, your mother, J—, Billy, and in my heart remain all the remarks made yesterday at Beekman Tower. They all had the one quality I needed—faith unconditional, faith in my integrity, endeavor, and purpose. With that to strengthen me I cannot fail to do that which is

right and honorable to my fundamental beliefs and convictions. . .

Later

We are now in the hotel in Shediak and it is 4:30 P.M. I am surrounded by an intense group of British, all trying hard to find that it is a fine and glamorous coast in a pioneering spirit, for this is an outpost of the Empire, so it must be good. It is not! Two charming ladies, both having lost their night bags and umbrellas, inquired longingly whether there was a good cup of tea to be served! Even before registering!

This is a broken-down place with a wooden inn painted a faded ochre and brown, and inside eight arm-chairs and a dusty fern. Can't you see it? I cannot think why we were not allowed to sleep on the plane, which is glorious. There is even a smoking-room, and I have got a perfect window seat in which I slept in the middle of lunch. I cajoled the head steward to give me a window, an upper berth—only a step to the washroom.

On the route of the Flying Clipper Ship, September 24, 1939

It is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning and we are roaring over vague white banks of snow-white

clouds above the bluest sky you have ever seen, and a warm sun—the same East Hampton, New York, London sun is blazing down on us. Down through gaps in these billowing clouds you can see vague green forests or peeps at the ocean. It makes one feel, winging above the clouds, the enormity of the achievement of man's mind—romantic and real and strong. Sometimes in the distance there is a blue lake bounded by cliffs of clouds, but it is not a lake, it is the sky showing from below the clouds.

I had an uncomfortable night at Shediak. The anticlimax of arriving in that dead, prohibitionist village, desperately cold and shabby, was acute.

Our next stop is Botswood, Newfoundland, and then we shall be flying over Ireland by dawn tomorrow.

I sat in front of the fire last night, correcting my strange writings, my American journal. There are several horrifying errors, judge the writing gently.

September 25, 1939

Hard writing, a touch bouncy flying in the Imperial Airways airliner over Ireland. Just a few words of cheer as we circle over the mountains around Limerick on the way to Southampton.

At Foynes I had your cable and one from Eileen.

I shall soon know what the news is at Winchester. I try not to worry.

This is a beautiful Imperial Airways flying-boat, and so far the weather seems good. We are flying now over St. George's Channel with the sun gleaming on the dead-calm water, but it is getting bitter cold and my greatcoat is very welcome.

Cumberland Hotel, London,

Tuesday, September 26, 1939, 1:30 a.m.

I only just arrived here after a nightmare journey from Birmingham by train. We left our beautiful plane and crawled through a tiny, sand-bagged doorway for customs, and then four and a half miles by taxi to catch the train from Birmingham. There I saw Gracie Fields who had come to meet Monty Banks, and next saw white lines painted on the mudguards and running boards of all the cars for safety in black-out driving. By the time we arrived at the station it was dark and getting darker, no lights and a dim cold station, everyone very subdued, many men in uniform, and, as it grew dark, only the weakest blue bulbs every thirty yards along the platform. You could not see faces and seldom people. Only when your eyes grew accustomed to the darkness could you see

where the platform ended and the tracks began. An hour's wait in this atmosphere and we literally stumbled into a pitch-black train. No lights at all in the carriages. There was vague moonlight through an English night mist, so you could not tell where you were when you were coming to a town—just black, gloomy, silhouetted buildings, and then in the stations the dim, blue lights. We stopped at every station, for there are few trains; fourteen or fifteen stations with more blue lights and we were in Waterloo, almost before we knew we had reached London. I saw only four lighted windows all that long journey, and just distinguished Big Ben as we crossed the river.

There was a message from L— when I landed, saying she would get onto the train at Southampton, but she never appeared, so here I am in a dead, sad, gloomy city, alone.

I have had a long talk with Eileen on the telephone. She is at Portmadoc. Apparently I am supposed to go into the army at once. However, I intend to be considerate and understanding, so surely I cannot fail to do what is right. A few English people I have talked to are convinced that the war will be over in six months or perhaps even by Christmas.

Winchester,

September 28, 1939

I am in Winchester and writing to you in the lounge of the nursing home. Daddy had to be moved here two weeks ago. It was an ordeal seeing him for which no amount of planning or imagining could prepare me. He is terribly ill and is suffering inhumanly. His courage and spirit are inspiring. I have now spent two and a half hours with him alone. He is terribly weak and cannot talk for long. I have just told him that I have registered for ambulance work and that I had informed the army authorities that I am here. This gave him intense pleasure. After that he talked a lot. His mind is brilliant and frighteningly alert and his humor bubbles all the time. The doctors say that he cannot possibly be expected to live for more than two or three weeks longer.

Friday, on the train to London

Daddy wanted me to go up to London and deal with my flat to save expense, so I have had to go. Last night I was with him for a long time and during this period he had two dreadful attacks. He said that a few groans helped. He dared not have them in front of mother! What a strange, small

thing to be able to do for him! What a way in which to help him!

Winchester,

Saturday, October 5, 8:30 p.m.

My mother and aunt are at the nursing home and I have an hour alone to write to you. I am sitting at Daddy's desk, with a friendly painting of William of Wyckham blessing my thoughts and behind me my father's books rising to the ceiling all round the room. The fire is crackling, it is still, and a benign ancestor watches me, half friendly and half skeptical, from over the mantelpiece. For the moment I feel relaxed and happy, for this room is full of my father. Tonight even the war news seems more hopeful, although there is a long way to go yet. I do not discuss the war and my ideas for peace at all, for if I did I should be lost. As you warned me, there is literally no one who feels as I do, and so many people are resentful about the United States and neutrality. I don't say at all what I feel unless I am asked definitely, then I do. It has been a bad day for Daddy, awful pain, and he is very much weaker. I have sat with him when they let me, and when he can speak it is always with humor and clearness and brilliance.

I never expected it, but now that he believes I

shall join up eventually, the one thing that gives him most delight is the news that has any glimmering towards peace. If only I had been here when he had the strength to talk it out with me, for his eyes glow with pride when I am with him, and ever since war was declared he has had his officer's belt polished and gleaming, ready for me to wear. What an incredible tragedy inherited opinions and attitudes are!

I went into Winchester Cathedral today for the evening service at 3:15 P.M. No 6:30 service now because of the black-outs. The sun was streaming through the windows and it was so beautiful. I thought of you and Mrs. R— and M— as you sat in this same great church two years ago.

War conditions are terrific. We are only allowed two gallons of gas a week for the car and the black-outs are complete. We have black cloth curtains hooked at the four corners of every window despite thick normal ones as well, and in the hall a dim blue bulb. Organization is certainly excessively thorough. I am trying to get extra gas because of our personal situation. With the doctor's letter I expect we shall be successful, but the army has made very sure of no lack of supplies.

The papers are disgraceful, but one tries to read between the lines and be hopeful. I shall go to the

nursing home in a few minutes to say good night.
to my father.

Winchester,

October 13, 1939

Last night I went in to say goodnight to Daddy. He had not known me all day, but he suddenly looked up and said, "Hello, old man, I give you my blessing." Today he recognizes no one.

I brought Emily Dickinson's poems to read after dinner, and when I left his room I opened it at random and read:

That such have died enables us
The tranquiller to die;
That such have lived, certificate
For immortality.

I showed it to my poor wretched mother and it comforted her. Emily Dickinson is my great comfort every day. I read her poetry and think of our wonderful visit to Amherst.

Winchester,

October 21, 1939

Although the address is Winchester, we are staying down at Barton-on-Sea for the weekend, my mother and I. L— is only a quarter of an hour

from the hotel at her work. The hotel is comfortable and delightfully cold after the true English style. My mind and handwriting all are in a quiet, rambling state of decline.

I sent the cable of my father's death to Mrs. R—. Perhaps some day when I am with you I will tell you of those weeks during my father's illness in the nursing home. Just now they are too vivid and tragic to say much about them. I am thankful I was allowed nearly ten days with him when he was able to talk quietly and intimately with me, and during those days I think we grew closer to one another than ever before. He talked to me about his own private philosophies and faiths, and though I knew him to be a gentle and honorable person, I never before knew how greatly he had lived nor what a true Christian he has always been to everyone whom he has known. I admire and love him with my whole heart for never all his life failing in what he felt his loyalty and his duty.

He never spoke again of my joining up or anything I might do in the war. He felt as he did because he believed it to be the right way, but I think and believe he knew my feelings, but in spite of that, and being as ill as he was, he was proud and grateful that I said I would do what he wanted.

We never mentioned the war at all together again.

I arranged the service and it was lovely. The tiny chapel decorated with colorful autumn flowers—Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums—and Daddy's coffin high above us on a great stone catafalque with the family flag over it and surrounded by sheaf upon sheaf and wreath upon wreath of endless flowers. Maybe you would like to see the service I chose. I enclose a copy for you. Also the announcement and notice from *The Times*. And now after all that suffering and misery come practical, difficult things.

Sunday, October 22, 1939

It is a glorious autumn day with the sun blazing down on a calm gray sea and the Isle of Wight in the distance. Southampton Water is only seven or eight miles away.

I have not allowed myself to have many personal thoughts during the last few weeks. I still won't discuss the war with anyone. The newspapers depress me, for only one point of view is allowed to be printed and one begins to wonder whether this is a democracy any longer. Did you hear or read Hore-Belisha's speech on the radio last night? I listened to one of the weekly summings-up last night for the first time, and I felt sick and ill and

depressed after it—a distorted, sneering quibble. A typical comment came from a well-to-do English grande dame in the hotel lounge when the speech had finished: “He speaks very well, doesn’t he?” That was all. This country is gradually being taught very effectively not to think any more.

Winchester,

November 4, 1939

I have just returned from a weekend with the R—’s in Essex, via London. I actually got back here on Wednesday, then my mother wanted to go to London so we scraped around for enough gas and drove up for two nights.

I must try to tell you something about London at night, for it is fantastic and tragic. I wanted to take mother out for a pleasant dinner and to a musical show, to bring her partly back into the world again, but we found ourselves in an inferno, for you are precipitated out of a blackened hotel lobby into the pitch blackness of the streets with only a torch between you and the wickedness of a vast city. Oxford Street was teeming with people at seven P.M., but not to be seen. You just had to walk slowly across the pavement to a taxi with your torch discreetly leveled at your feet and with people mumbling, bad-tempered people walking

over you and through you, and when we did find a taxi we crept down Oxford Street with nothing but dim traffic lights and the dimmed side lights of the taxis to help one believe that living still existed. Somehow the cabman had found the right spot to stop in those square miles of blackness. We stepped out into the middle of more unseen people. It was terrifying to hear suddenly beside you someone laughing or breathing. We eventually found the chink of light coming from the door of the restaurant and went in through curtains organized to let you in without showing light on the pavements—and then blazing, dazzling electric light again and people you could not see, only hear. How long can people's nerves stand this and how long will it take for circumstances like this to alter people's very natures and intellects? I have my principles and ideals and future plans, but I am conscious of the horror and degradation of this situation. What of the people who have accepted, what of the people who do not think and do not notice it, and, most of all, what of the people who are amused at it and even enjoy it?

We went to an excellent musical show with Cecily Courtneigh and Jack Hurlburt for its stars. She is a great musical-comedy artist. The audience was crammed with khaki and naval and air-force

blue; officers and ordinary soldiers, all mixed up; women in every sort of ill-fitting uniform. The house was bulging. For three hours, I suppose, everyone was able to relax to some degree. One had the feeling all the time the entire audience was praying that the show could go on and on and on. When it was over, we stepped from all this music and light into a blue gloom. We went into the dead-black world again, jostling unseen people and fighting for taxis which we could not find.

Winchester,

Sunday, November 5, 1939

The seeming certainty of the United States' neutrality makes me happy, but the announcement in the papers today that the United States Line's sailings for England are cancelled owing to neutrality laws gives me a feeling of immeasurably increased remoteness.

I have received a large mail from America. All the letters were so alive and sane that I had a burst of homesickness. I cannot answer them at once, so do tell our friends of the incalculable comfort they give me.

You will be interested to hear that literally hundreds and hundreds of young men are kicking their heels for enlistment vacancies. At the moment

it seems that there will be ten months or so before any of these men have a chance of enlistment.

We are now settling my father's estate, and people such as ourselves and the R—'s cannot even comprehend as yet how completely their method of living must be changed. I spent last weekend in Essex. People whom one had considered rich have given up four cars, and their husbands now go to the London trains on bicycles. Nearly every family is sharing their home with another family, or, if fortunate, taking in paying guests. The most level-minded people say that this is not a temporary condition but that when peace comes life will probably take the form of regular community living!

I have bought some high boots, like yours. This was simply to encourage my feet not to drop off from the ankle, on account of frost-bite. This climate is appalling, no doubt about that. Do you ever see the sun? We don't.

Cumberland Hotel, London,
November 8, 1939

I have just been walking through the blackness of London again, this time alone, but tonight it was beautiful as well as terrifying. As I walked along Regent Street, the stars were in the sky above me

to remind me that in this black world there is beauty and light if we would only be conscious of it. Lightning lit the sky every now and then, but the thunder was too far away to hear. I am happy to be able to enjoy this beauty and to take comfort from the feeling that one's consciousness and feelings and thoughts can be and are a vast fortress which no circumstances can touch, if we are determined to defend it, as I am.

I am in London, and on my own for a few nights, to try to penetrate red tape. I have been asked to join an acting company that is to open at Reading at the end of January.

Because I love America so much and grew to understand it, strange as it may be, I very often feel in London as if I were a visitor, absorbed as I am in the United States' outlook and customs and appearances.

Winchester,

November 14, 1939

It has been a bad day. The sky over Winchester has been full of planes, and the roar of vast motors on many bombing planes has been kept up for hour upon hour. I suppose we are very much on our guard for something. Several people today have said that Winston Churchill's speech last night is

the best peace move of the war. This seems to me an incredible point of view, for I listened to it. If it had been directed at me, I would never have sat still for long under it. Of course he is the finest orator in this country and he has a fine brain, but the sneering hatred he transmitted to me is terrifying.

I saw A— in London last week and she told me that S— had been nominated for Rector of Aberdeen University by the pacifist group there for her work for peace, but I see today in *The Times* that she did not get elected. She had tremendous names against her. She apparently speaks in every town that she plays in.

I also had dinner with E— on Wednesday night. We met at 7:30 P.M. and I left in the midst of the blackness at 9:15, having just eaten and talked. I was very weary after an incursion into Birmingham legal life and could hardly keep awake. She is opening her house again and the children are returning to her from Wales. This does not seem wise to me, as London surely is no place for a brood of children.

November 14, 1939

The gloom still is on. Lunch with H— was stimulating, but the reaction after enjoyment seems

great. The theatre seems to be creeping and stumbling back to life. In tonight's paper there are eighteen shows on in London, of which ten are musicals. The only one of any interest is the new Priestley play which people report as being bad. *The Playboy of the Western World* is on at the Dutchess and *George and Margaret*, believe it or not, has been revived again. The other plays are broad farces, though just outside of London at Golders Green, Robert Donat is playing Romeo.

More and more people are saying that this so-called war will come to nothing, but, ye gods! it does get you down, for the longer you are in the middle of it the less you know about it, for everyone is bombarded with censored facts. In time you are bound to absorb a certain amount of the general point of view, although I am personally trying very hard, and so far with success, to absorb none of this.

I received a letter today from you from Amherst. I am so glad you saw the C—'s and once again that magnificent college theatre. They are delightful people and I shall never forget Amherst and Emily Dickinson. I am reading Tolstoi's *War and Peace*—in three volumes! Perhaps I shall finish the third volume before the war ends.

Ebury Street, London,
November 17, 1939

There is a chance now that our company may open in London instead of Reading next January. The gloom remains terrific but I have had some uninterrupted moments for inner peace. Did I tell you that I have just finished *The Grapes of Wrath*? I do not take kindly to novels but this novel is great. It could make a superb play, I think. It has the breadth and height of Greek tragedy.

Winchester,
November 19, 1939

Many people are going back to London now. I feel profoundly indifferent when people talk of the dangers of London, for to me it is hardly more dangerous than anywhere else.

Meanwhile there seems to be a further chance of work in London. I should love to go with a theatre troupe to France. I might do it.

Did I tell you that I had a fresh and enthusiastic letter from S—, all because she was poor and in a downtown apartment for the first time in her life? She was contented because she is happy and in love. Contentment is easy under these circum-

stances, isn't it? But when you can, despite separation and disappearances and despairs, still be contented and sure of the objects of fulfilment of living, then you can really come to a true realization of the strength and necessity in everyone's life for proving the power of real love.

Monday, November 20, 1939

There has been great protest lately complaining bitterly against the monstrous inefficiency of the censor's office, so I can believe in any delay that may affect my letters. Apparently the censor's office is hidden somewhere in the country and manned by London society ladies who work with supreme irresponsibility and also put out of work many people who have had post-office experience and who could do it properly.

This is all to work off my innocent and righteous fury. I should imagine this letter would be censored!

Winchester,

November 26, 1939

I am going up to London tomorrow. Meanwhile I shall have to woo the art of patience.

Do you know that when I get back to New York, the first thing I want to do in the city will

be to go on to Broadway and drink in the glitter of lights, then I will feel better.

I have bought a vast torch to move about with in London after curfew. It gives out a search-light beam and is very comforting. How one prays for moonlight!

I have at last given up being alarmed or indignant at news of disasters or reprisals. This is war, and to me it is just as horrifying to one's heart and feelings to read of German disasters and privations as our own. I am constantly horrified by suffering and hatred, but no new move or "secret weapon" excites or worries me. I still refuse to believe that the full fury of modern warfare will really begin despite the growling fury of the Prime Minister's speech last night.

Winchester,

December 1, 1939

As I write, a quarter of a million men of twenty-three are to be called up in the new year. Meanwhile what of this tortured continent! Russia and Finland now fighting, as well as Germany, France, and England. There is not one direct conflict, but three wars, including China and Japan's, all going on at cross purposes. One begins to wonder how the world will ever be able to straighten out their end-

less differences, clashing and vital interests, in an effort to return to some sort of sanity and decency.

Your letters are a clean breath from a sane and healthy world, coming from a different earth, utterly unlike the one on which I now walk. The theatre is still improving. Beatrice Lillie opens out of London this week in a new revue which comes into town on December 14. *Judgment Day* has been revived and the members of the St. Denis company have started a rather questionable season in a tiny London theatre. Priestley's newest play, *Music at Midnight*, is still going very well and S— comes back to London in two weeks from a tour with *The Corn is Green*. All musicals are packed every night by the military on leave. *The Importance of Being Ernest*, with Edith Evans, Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, and so on also comes back for a short London season after a long tour. But of course the unemployment among actors and musicians is fearful.

I have had supper several times at the Café Royale amongst all the famous stage folks. How sane, sensitive, and energetic they seem compared to most people, despite their tired and rather pasty faces.

F— is about to do a portrait of me. He is one of the most promising of the young artists in the

country, according to our critics. It seems silly to sit for a portrait but at least it will keep me still during the sittings.

Winchester,

December 8, 1939

This has been a terrific week, what with blood-curdling added taxation and Finland's being in the process of tortured mutilation. I have been spending some time now sitting for my portrait. Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach have kept me quiet and F—— himself talks brilliantly.

What with one thing and another, without being unduly morbid, I have decided I should make "me will." Having done this, I shall make up my mind to die at ninety-two, on the stage of an immense theatre in New York, with over one hundred collapsing in a box at the same moment.

We are going *en famille* for Christmas to the Grand Hotel, Swanage, Dorset, from December 22nd through the 27th. It is a quiet resort on the Dorset coast. L—— joins us there.

December 12, 1939

I miss my father more and more every day; the realization of the true fact of his absence, his voice, his touch, and his influence grow stronger with

the passing of time and it makes me even more dependent on friends.

The latest news of —'s plans is that her apartment is not going to be taken. Her man of business says that air raids are certain. This I can hardly see as true, for though London is the center of world trade, it is tremendously fortified now and all important businesses, the Bank of England, *et cetera*, are all in the country. Only the newspaper offices and Parliament remain. And how important or significant either of these is is somewhat debatable these days! Do you know I just cannot comprehend what worse muddle or disaster can conceivably happen in this tortured continent. Do we fight Russia now? Are we determined on self-destruction? It is pathetic to hear the great churchmen and politicians and experts on history trying to justify each new madness. How can this country ever become normal again when they spend six million pounds each day on the war? It is a very rich country, but not that rich! And what of Germany? How can she last six months? Finland's stand, even for two weeks, helps one regain one's belief in a Divinity which does shape our destinies. How can anyone bear living at all these days without some belief in a God and the principles of St. Francis! I have been engaging lately in a happy friendship

with St. Francis. The difficulty is that one has to discover one's own route towards contact with a faith in God. It seems to me that the rituals and conventions of established churches are often more of a wall erected across such a route than a sign post along it. However, when you can find your own approach, it becomes much plainer, much more impregnable. I cannot believe that we are God's servants. I believe that we are His friends. You see I am attaining some sort of faith; but why cannot our churchmen admit that faith is a personal experience?

December 16, 1939

The grass is still green and the sun still appears even in this country. There are indeed eager, exciting, permanent realities. I still hope that the war may not break into its full fury.

December 18, 1939

At 2:30 A.M. I read these words from *War and Peace*: "One must believe in the possibility of happiness in order to be happy," and yesterday I awoke with a heart singing more joyously than it has for many, many weeks. In the afternoon I borrowed a spaniel from a friend and walked along a quiet muddy lane, which crossed plowed earth

with a bloom of green over it from the young grass which is beginning already to push through. The sky was a pinky gray and the wind was icy. There was frost in the air and my cheeks and ears were burned by the wind. I walked for miles across the fields and past bare woods, the only sound the occasional clatter of pheasants' wings, and I knew a great calm and contentment.

I walked down the steep Winchester High Street at four o'clock before the sky had grown dark. The shops showed their usual blaze of light, great bunches of holly hung outside one of them. Another was decorated with snow, Father Christmas, and glittering silver stars. Outside of another shop was a pole trimmed with holly, from which hung fat turkeys. The pavements overflowed with people, their faces glowing from the cold and all about me was the sound of many voices and laughter, but before I had left the High Street and turned towards my mother's house, the dark had come. One by one the lighted shops grew black and the only light left was a dimmed light from a few cars. And then I heard the clash of many soldiers marching. The glowing faces of the Christmas shoppers could no longer be seen, and gradually the darkness crept into the hearts of everyone. A black-out was upon us. But I still have a happy

feeling from my walk in the country. I believe still in the possibility of a peace, and if we give up believing in that possibility, then it may not really come for years.

Grand Hotel, Swanage, Dorset,
December 23, 1939

I walked along a road skirting below high cliffs and with a dead calm sea rustling below me. The sands were white with frost and through a light gray mist a fat red sun was gleaming on the water. Hundreds of gulls were bobbing up and down on the ripples of the sea and children were running along the beach chasing dogs. The children were shouting and the dogs were barking and the world seemed rather good.

This was my road to the tiny postoffice at Swanage where I was to send you my Christmas cable.

I am writing to you in the bright noisy lounge of the Grand Hotel, crowded with subdued elders and excited children. From this hotel on the top of the cliffs we look due south across the Channel. Yesterday was a heavenly clear day, bitterly cold, but with a blazing sun, and the drive here through Dorset was exquisite.

We came suddenly upon A— Castle, whose ruins sit on a high grass mound, silhouetted against

the sky. As we passed the little hill on which the old castle commanded the distance, we suddenly came upon a miniature town built up and down two hills with winding streets which had no pavements. The small cottages were built of gray stone and had slate roofs covered with moss, and there was yellow jasmine on their walls, and in the gardens holly bushes loaded down with red berries. I remind myself often that one must never lose faith in the fact that difficulties are surmounted and overcome. I really do attain confident hopefulness. There seems to be more optimism about the war at the moment. From many sources people believe that it will be over by the spring. However, the papers do not give any hope or even encouragement. However, only yesterday, the London Stock Exchange had the best day since August, and that even in normal times is unusual just before Christmas. Yesterday I received two letters from you both opened by the censor, but nothing had been crossed out.

I have just read a fine article written by a clergyman about the difficulty of this Christmas. It is called "The Supremacy of Love." I shall quote part of it for you: "The demonstration of the supremacy of love has been shown to be a creative principle capable of transforming human nature

into an instrument of God's redemptive purpose. Love's sovereignty can become effective only as men yield themselves to it. We cannot know the power of love unless we ourselves are loving, but if we live out our creed, we shall be sure of its truth. It does not lose heart because the kingdom of peace and good will come slowly upon earth but finds in that very fact a challenge to prove love's power to overcome evil."

Grand Hotel, Swanage, Dorset,
December 27, 1939

The 1939 Christmas is over at last and I am thankful. I received many American cables on Christmas morning as well as three letters from you and your Christmas cards. That glorious one of Fra Giovanni touched me very deeply.

I am longing to hear of your Christmas and about the party you gave for the children at Graycroft.

Being in a luxurious hotel for Christmas is horrible. However, I danced every night, drank a good deal, and spent the day exploring this most satisfying Dorset coast. Yesterday I escaped by myself and walked along the coast with the sea three hundred feet below me. The cliffs were sheer and forbidding, undermined by giant caves. As you

stood looking at the sea blazing in the reflected sun, you could hear the waves thundering and echoing through the caves.

I go to London tomorrow. S—'s play is in London again.

There is a great deal of talk about the war's ending in the spring.

Sydney Street, London,

January 6, 1940

I have planned so long that I might be able to return to America that I have come to believe that I would honorably be able to leave. I have just received the following news: "We regret it is not possible at the moment to grant an exit permit for which application has been made." As I read those words, I received astonishing strength to accept their meaning boldly. I have had such high hopes for different news and have been so full of bitter apprehension so long that when this definite news came, I was prepared as I am now for all news. The reasons for the refusal must be plain to you as they are to me. We are in for it.

We have got to be convinced that man is capable of conceiving in his mind inconceivable things and that each moment can produce unimaginable creativeness. Yes, we have got to know that nothing is

unattainable, that each one of us can exist above all human needs of suffering and loneliness and despair. There are tremendous forces which we can tap, forces that are incalculably stronger than we ourselves.

I had a long and stimulating talk with S— on Thursday evening. She gave the same advice to me that she had given to her son. "Do not wait for your age to be called but offer to do ambulance work as soon as possible in order to prove your sincerity and good faith." I am going to volunteer for ambulance work in Finland, which is to me the most essential and honorable offer to make in a tortured world.

I am in the flat at the moment with my treasured Mrs. Kelly watching over my well-being for two hours every day. On Monday I am going to take on a small comedy part in a try-out play which hopes to transfer to the West End. It opens at Richmond in two weeks. I do not know who is in the cast but I hear it is a strong one. All this seems rather futile but I feel I must at once do something active while I wait to hear about ambulance driving in Finland.

S— has been suffering the most scurrilous attacks for her brave out-spoken idealisms, and though it in no way deters her, she is gravely hurt

by it for she is intensely patriotic in her own way, and always sincere.

I expect that E— has told you that R— can hardly move now for the gold braid which smotherers his uniform. More and more uniforms appear; almost as many women are in khaki as men, and the majority of my friends are now in France. Perhaps in two months or less I may be muffled above the ears, driving a bouncing lorry full of tortured people through the snow. If I am doing it, there will be a fine purpose in that, and if circumstances alter and I am not doing it, then there will be a reason for that too.

Living in this country these days one must be constructively occupied. To entertain troops in France or in home barracks would be objective and right. To entertain in London is to me the worst kind of hollow, artificial objectiveness. There are far more half-witted civilians than soldiers at these plays, and these civilians do not need escape for they do not think!

My decision to drive an ambulance is criticised but I know the rightness of this decision in existing circumstances.

I wonder about your reactions to Roosevelt's latest speech. I admired it very much. I am still at *War and Peace*. I read myself to sleep with that and

also an entrancing novel called *How Green Was My Valley*. I hope that you have read it and loved it.

Sydney Street, London,

Sunday, January 14, 1940

So cold it is that I can hardly hold my pen. Hyde Park is looking like fairyland through a thick mist. The sun is a dark scarlet globe making the mist and the trees and the grass white with frost, a faint pink color. The people are moving shapes. The hum of traffic is comforting; the only other sounds to be heard are the happy shouts of children and the barking of dogs.

I walked through the great crowd listening to the Hyde Park orators. I stopped to hear some of them. Next to a huge crowd in front of a roaring Socialist speaker was a little semi-circle of people singing "Abide With Me," the Salvation Army, and further down the park was Bonar Thompson, who is the most famous speaker in Hyde Park. As I came up to him, he was saying: "I 'ave got no ideals. I I don't believe in anything. I 'ave got no faith in anything except the earth and the clouds and the plowman. Now 'e 'as to 'ave intelligence. You may say it is just instinct. It ain't. It is fundamental intelligence. I 'ate your idealist and your earnest

feller with a cause. Give me the earth. No one can take that away from yer. Yer may be shoved around, but the earth's always there."

I moved on across the hard white grass and looked up at Grosvenor House and across the riding track, past groups of soldiers and befurred women, and so out into Hyde Park Corner and back to the flat.

Your letter describing your Christmas party made me again almost unbearably homesick. With a week of crystal-clear nights everyone has predicted big air raids on London, but they have not come and I wonder if they ever will.

I may do an audition for the Troop Entertainment Concert Parties. I am pushing out in every direction, but moving slowly. It is the only thing to do, for any definite decision today is so irrevocable and may have such irrevocable consequences. I shall not attempt to describe to you what mental confusion one goes through these days. There is so much mental distress and uncertainty and artificiality. There are many men younger than myself, with even less experience of living than I have, who have to make fundamental decisions which must affect their whole lives. They are either tortured by the impossibility of making one, especially the right one, or they take the line of least resistance

and then regret it; or which is worse than all the torment, they are told how to think, and think accordingly. You talk to these young men and you realize they have no individual soul. They are not even partially realized human beings, and because they happen to have been born seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, or twenty years ago, they may never be fully realized individuals. That causes my greatest agonizing—not for people of my own age and older, but for these younger than I am. I have had a glorious chance of realization. They have not had half a chance. What is it all about? I have been thinking for a bit when I was eighteen and nineteen I wanted a few certainties as well as obstacles. The men who are eighteen and nineteen and twenty have not discovered the secret of living, and the world offers them now, or most of the world offers them, a deadly and uncertain chaos; and it is not only the experience of youth, but of hundreds of thousands of semi-educated people who are now realizing that they must think and act for the first time. No one has time or the wish to help them. They are presented with a hard, cruel, inflexible pattern. I have talked lately to shopkeepers, gas men, *et cetera*, and they are pitifully confused and pitifully receptive to your interest, but how little a few individuals can do when many millions need

help and sympathy. I love human beings and I hate to watch mental suffering unless it is constructive and unless through it and in it one can be fulfilled.

The story of your Christmas party really refreshed me, as does every thought of your life and our friends who are still living a creative life.

Sydney Street, London,

January 26, 1940

I have not written to you lately as I have been feeling very gloomy indeed. I have been told that there are no vacancies in the Finnish Ambulance Corps. I know that we now must be prepared to face a long war, but I refuse to accept that knowledge as inevitable. I am having a natural reaction from the strain of my father's death and because of all this uncertainty around me. Everyone talks *at* you and fails to realize that your decision and your life are for you to form and decide. It is so hard to be objective and clear in your thinking when you are in the thick and part of a disaster. No one away from it can realize fully the way in which everything becomes warped, unreal, and hysterical at such a time as this. The fact of war is undeniable, and whatever you feel and think, the madness is about you all the time, goaded on by the gigantic, pulsing war machinery and organization. The en-

tire machinery gathers increasing momentum and is relentless. You begin to feel yourself a small wheel fixed in the machine which cannot leave its place. Nothing is normal, emotions have altered, thought seems to function in an entirely new form. New standards of behavior, ideals, faiths, relationships become accepted so swiftly that you cannot tell, unless you fight desperately hard, wherein they are different. Your instincts tell you they are, but even your reasoning sometimes cannot tell where. The individual has suddenly ceased to exist, his only use is some strange function in some vague state of formation for some obscure end. You begin to realize that the huge majority has accepted, as if it had always existed, this new function for the individual. I am trying so hard to place myself outside the present situation, to think back to a time when war was not a fact. I feel through my instincts as I have always felt. I have not changed my philosophies, and naturally I have thought it out coolly and calmly; I will do nothing definite, but I do disapprove so violently of the methods of the pacifist organizations over here. Their theories are practically divorced from the fundamentals, and groups through their connections with these organizations seem to miss the fundamentals too. I want personal peace and aloneness to work out my

decisions. I want to discuss these matters with people who know me and my ideals.

April 15, 1940

I am now on a bouncing, bounding, rickety train on the way back to London from Essex. It is my first breakaway from London for six months. You have not heard from me lately because just before the rehearsals started I was laid up with the flu. It was a serious epidemic.

I am sharing a flat with —. It is a new experience to have somebody consider me pleasant, as I have been considering everyone else all over the place for nearly six months.

I have been thinking a great deal lately about the beauty of East Hampton. How could one fail to love America when introduced to your great country by living in a village of such distinction? I have been meeting many theatre "names," so-called successes. They all are fundamentally sweet and affectionate, but they decided long ago that friends did not matter, that real friendship was not essential for happiness and integrity and achievement. As a result they are now superficially vivid, successful, nervy, bitter, and very unhappy people. You must hold on to integrity if you are to live fully, and to that equally precious quality, loyalty.

Many of these other people get on, but when they have reached a goal, they have nothing beyond them or around them to make them feel secure. They are really all scared all of the time that they won't last.

This war cannot go on; it is already showing itself as the suicide of Europe. One could not conceive on paper or in the imagination of its immensity until it began. I do believe that invention, as Nobel said, has reached such a pitch that when all the deadliest machinery that has been invented is used, checkmate comes.

There is, of course, growing criticism of America. Sumner Welles' mission was given practically no press, and then only ridicule. America has no supporter more unshockable than myself. Thank God you are all being cautious and true to yourselves! America is the last country still alive to the simple standards of civilized Christian humanity. Pray God you will keep out of it! The European mess will never be solved unless it is solved by Europe itself. Just as the individual never solves his big personal problems constructively by taking the advice and the support of some friend. Heaven help you if false sentimental emotion is pumped into the United States. I pray, I really pray that you will stay out.

May 14, 1940

Thank God you have had my letter. Since I wrote it, the whole atmosphere and face of Europe has altered yet again. To realize fully the urgency of tension, just read your most blood-curdling newspapers. Regard your feelings after an hour's reading, and then double them. Then you may realize the atmosphere I have lived in since last Friday. We have all been living complacently on this little island ever since the war started. We have never believed that our civilian population would be attacked because it has never happened before in any war. We have always been very good sympathizers with other nations in other wars—France, Belgium, Norway, Finland, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Spain, Abyssinia, Albania, Austria, Denmark, and now Holland. At last everyone realizes, and rightly, that within the next few weeks, even days, what happens just across the Channel, only twenty miles away, will decide whether we ourselves are invaded.

Since Friday all the police have been armed, every open space of any sort or size has been guarded by armed troops, as you will have read, and three thousand Germans have been interned. The news today is appalling and very ominous, and

one cannot tell which way things are going. England is really alive at last. Every broadcast gives full instructions about possible parachute landings, and one can be sure that if things do not go well in Holland, they may try to invade England. The London balloon barrage has been doubled. Looking up into a vivid blue sky above Piccadilly Circus today, the whole roof of the world was thick with distant silver balloons. Even halving reports of German atrocities, one cannot but cry out to God for a clear judgment as to punishing the many instigators of it all. Friends I know have been told to be ready for Dutch and Belgian refugees today, and I say to you again, how else can anyone help now except by meeting this colossal force with even firmer force, but keep that force as clean as possible. Surely we can only stop this endless slaughter and torture of innocents by practical means. I hope to God that all this horror may stop, but until my prayer grows in volume from the mouths of a vast company of people, our only method of helping those innocents is to kill the killer. My greatest faith is that the anguished prayer of one person may bring peace nearer than a thousand guns, but many, many prayers must be offered before the guns may be silenced; not prayers for victory and success, but humble prayers

asking for forgiveness and with a love of all peoples in our hearts.

As to being in "concert" work, only the old men may offer their gift for bringing laughter.

I met A— on Saturday and he seems to have eternal sadness in his eyes. All his family are in Vienna or Berlin, with no money, for he kept them alive on the money he used to get to them. He said that so many of his friends, and thousands upon thousands like them, were forced to fight now, and surely their disgust of it all would eventually help crack the machine.

I have come to my decision absolutely alone, with an American way in my heart and mind. As things are now, my personal and private beliefs are not of consuming importance. The only way I can help is by being within the machinery of war, but always with faith and hope and love still in my heart.

The general feeling about the war is that it may be over by the end of the year. Of course one always has to remember the same opinion after a year of the last war, but I do feel that Germany is staking everything on one great push. Then, pray God, we shall have peace, peace for us all, for Germans as well. God knows that most of them deserve it as much as we do, many of them even

more. This is rather a grim letter, but have courage in the knowledge that my spirit is unaffected.

May 20, 1940

I have just received a letter from you mailed on May 12th and opened by the censor. It gave me a slight shock, but one realizes how necessary it is now. Only after Holland's collapse in that incredibly short time of three days have we realized that we do not only have to deal with fronts and lines, but that inside of every country the vast army of spies and enemy sympathizers has been assembling for years. Already something like seven thousand aliens have been properly interned within the last week, and still there are well over sixty thousand people without British nationality at large here.

The different atmosphere since Churchill became Prime Minister is incredible, and the things that have been done are beyond one's wildest hopes. London in these days looks like a garrison city, and within a few hours of Beaverbrook's arrival to deal with air production the two greatest aircraft concerns are amalgamated and reorganized as they should have been months, even years, ago. It was all horrible and naturally against one's deepest beliefs and consciousness that this is how we must live, yet now that we have to face the possi-

bility of invasion or disaster, it gives us encouragement that the job that has been embarked upon is being carried out, not played with. The liberty of Finland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg would still exist if our so-called leader had not slept for a solid six months and if his intimates had not drowsed on a daybed in his suite. Luckily, Chamberlain, as president of the Council, has no say at all. The budget has been disastrous without any immediate practical advantages. Maybe the colossal resources which France and England have—they seem almost unlimited—will be used to end this unbearable massacre, not just to satisfy the theories of tired, conceited old business men.

For the last three days one has obviously been living on the edge of an active volcano. Who can possibly tell or guess what will happen next? One can only hope that our effort will be so colossal that the war may be over before the winter.

I wonder how you feel about Roosevelt. The opinion here is that he is probably the greatest living diplomat and the ordinary public see him gradually persuading America into the war through his intense cunning. I hope this is not so.

Of course if there are big air raids over this country within this week I see everything stopping and every living person being organized into direct

war effort—no cinemas, theatres, shops, *et cetera*, other than food shops, but a great centralization of all effort and man power into the war machine. The situation is serious enough to warrant it. It is almost impossible now to think of anything else but the war and the suffering in Holland and Belgium. Refugees are pouring into England. Reading is hard, concentration is difficult. There is still music, and when you are in the open it is impossible to lose faith or hope when you feel the warmth of the sun and when you see the blue of the sky and the color of the summer flowers. Tomorrow seems a thousand years away one moment, and the next moment you realize that tomorrow has passed and seems a lifetime, for in an hour the face of a continent has again changed.

These are frightening, tragic, thrilling days to be living through. Those of us who live through them or die during one of them courageously, retaining our love and faith, will indeed have achieved great things. We shall not have to hope for happiness or work for it later on. I think it will be our supreme reward.

My dear old cousin is very ill. I may be a peer of the realm before long—a strange time to become one. Perhaps it is a lucky omen, for the family have survived a good many revolutions.

The result of the present crisis on theatres in London has been terrible, at least six shows came off last week and several more end this week. Two big new productions are postponed indefinitely. The only shows making any money are the ones on the road. Maybe we will be lucky with ours.

I hope you get this letter. It is written in all innocence and I hope the censor does not disturb its shape.

I saw Emlyn Williams' newest play, *The Light of Heart*. It is real theatre, not a great play, but the writing is pure poetry and really very beautiful. I also saw *King Lear* at the Old Vic last week. Fay Compton is announced in *Family Portrait*. I have no idea whether it will get on or not.

Theatre Royal, Birmingham,

June 13, 1940

I have so much news to give you. I had my medical examination just a week ago, but in the hectic rush of going off with the play I could not write to you. Out of forty men examined with me, I was the only one passed as Grade I, which says something for the general health, doesn't it? So now all I have to do is to wait and be told what I must do.

In a very few months I see every man up to forty-five in one of the forces. The situation is very

serious. There is no time to think of anything except ending this horror as quickly as possible. One always said that no amount of imagining could gauge the exact magnitude of devastation that total war today would cause, and it is truer than any of us ever thought.

I was talking to three Air Force friends the other day who were having twenty-four hours leave, the first leave for months. One of them, a very ordinary, unimaginative young married man, said that even he could not fly over Belgium in the daylight without feeling tears on his cheeks, tears for the utter wrecking devastation. He said that not in any of our lifetimes could Northern Belgium ever be a country again. Not only were some towns in ruins, but in every town and village for miles upon hundreds of miles there was not one house standing; the vast city of Rotterdam in complete ruins and every town in Belgium, except in the extreme south, in the same state as Holland's Rotterdam. And now they are creeping across France. Think of Calais and Dieppe and Havre and Boulogne, all smoking ruins! Directly our planes reached the east coast of England they needed no compasses a week ago. The fires of Dunkirk lighted the sky! And so if we want to preserve one city in Europe as a record of creative progress through two thou-

sand years of striving, the only thing for us all to do now is to silence the guns with greater guns. The whole affair is out of our control. Nothing can stop it but practical, unselfish effort here and humble prayer and embracing love and pity for every person suffering this torment. One must believe in a future or be lost. I believe in a future, even for Europe, finer and more real than any state in the past. This torture must purge our minds and reconstruct our standards. If we can approach the torture with humility and love, then, when the war is over, in spite of disease, in spite of poverty and famine and bitterness, we can and we must found a new order of integrity which will dispel forever the past hundred years' artificialities. A humility which will take the place of greed and pride, and interest and love which must take the place of mistrust and cruelty. There are such permanent qualities in the heart and soul of man that one can never lose hope or stop finding courage for long. Whatever machines of destruction may do to the earth, in time grass will push through the soil towards the sun. The permanent things are always near to encourage us. The permanent qualities of the divine heart of man are love and nobility and joy and pity. The qualities of hatred and cruelty are really superimposed ones, not permanent ones, in the heart

of any man, German, Italian, Russian, English or French.

My father has died, with immortal suffering, and now the only things I remember of him are his courage, his excellence, his honesty, and his laughter. These are the permanent things. Our quarrels, his anger, sometimes, and our difficulties I do not remember, for they are not permanent, so I have courage and hope and no bitterness today.

I have been asked to take a commission as an officer, with three special mentions, I think because of "me" double name, and the military board who interviewed me at the same time as the medical asked me if I would take a commission in the Grenadier or Irish Guards. I said that if I was needed there, if they thought me suitable, I would, and I am, of course, prepared to work where there is most need. I completely believe all I have said to you in this letter, and I know that you must believe it too.

This tour will end in two weeks. The recent news of Italy's being in the war, and earlier the expectation of Paris' falling, has all but killed even the provincial theatres. In London there are four star companies, Leslie Banks in one, Evelyn Laye in another, and we are all taking in an average twelve pounds per night in theatres which can take

twelve hundred pounds per week. It is only a matter of time now before all theatres are closed. In the London paper today I see there are just four shows left, tottering along, and really it is as it should be for we are in a real jam and we have got to gain strength and courage from within ourselves and no longer by escape. If we can really do this, we may end this war suddenly and quickly. You know what it costs me to say this of the theatre, but I do say it from my heart. All true artists are in agreement. If the theatre is to live on, we must retain its standards and ideals in our hearts. This tottering, puerile theatre which presents any rubbish as an artificial escape will kill the real theatre as it almost did after the last war.

Prince of Wales Theatre, Cardiff,

June 20, 1940.

A short letter for you written between scenes during a matinee, for I know you must be deeply worried over the latest news, but of course you must not be afraid. The situation is desperate, but only hopeless if individual hearts make it so.

Since I last wrote I have experienced an air raid, and I promise you the anticipation is far worse than the event. Why fear death these days? Life will always be precious to me, more precious than all

things. These days one may justifiably fear life, sometimes more than death. Strangely enough, with my exceedingly active imagination, I have neither fear nor any despair. I know how desperate our position is, but I believe in the real things so firmly that I still hold passionately to the joy of living. With more and more people finding more and more reasons why the United States should come in and help us, I know with an even greater conviction than ever that it would be truly and ultimately wrong if you did. The day the United States came in too, then I might despair, for this ghastly slaughter has spread so quickly and mercilessly all over Europe that I keep on saying, the greatest courage is still found for me in the sure knowledge that true, sane, peaceful living is still going on somewhere. Help us with planes and supplies, but behind that, go on living normally and calmly with every-day, ordinary living. Refuse yourselves the luxury of jitters. For all of you that is just as hard these days as fighting and killing is for us. Go on acting, painting, writing, and learning. Go on looking at lovely buildings, appreciate calmly their beauty. Go on putting up new and beautiful buildings. Go on discovering how to conquer disease and to prevent suffering, as well as building armaments; preserve and proceed with

that culture we have all been building and creating for so many centuries. If you are not left in peace to do this, then indeed I will say that Hitler's rule of the jungle has triumphed over the best in our civilization! If you can guard the real and the good things for us, the simple, everyday things, then I personally need never despair. I can always see the future which will build and build higher and ever higher towards the world you and I believe in.

If you do not hear from me for a time, do not be disturbed. These days communications are often chaotic. The other day, for instance, no civilian calls from the town where we were, were allowed through by telephone.

The thought of the Studio this summer makes me so excited and happy too. I sometimes feel the thrill of it all here as I did when I was there, and I think ahead to the other years when I will be with you all again.

St. Alban Street

July 2, 1940.

A long letter that I wrote you two weeks ago on tour has been returned as remarks regarding air raids were censored, so you will probably have been thinking I have lapsed into another silence. I will rewrite the other letter and mail it off. In the

meantime here is a short one to tell you I am back in London, the tour ended, and within the next ten days I expect to be training in the army. The theatre is almost completely dead, even out of London, and everyone, men and women, will be doing something direct for war work.

I cabled my wishes for you all today, a day late I know, but I thought of you often during The Day. As it happened, I arrived back on Sunday night from the north of England, to find a very critical situation as affecting personal matters. I was in time and all is well. It is a bit hard to have this kind of thing to cope with on top of everything else, but in some miraculous way one does cope, and learns so much for the future, even during the bitterest and most unpleasant experiences. I am all right, how I do not quite know, but I am. I get the most undreamed of strength and courage. People's nerves snap all around me, yet I manage to keep my own. We are in for a tremendous and agonizing task very soon. We may come through and we may not. There is no politician or historian alive who can say which.

July 4, 1940

I am back in London expecting any day to be in khaki.

Many, many people are sending their children to America, as you know. The wonderful offers of homes by Americans have heartened people almost more than anything else in these last months. They have also taken some of the sting out of the criticisms of the U.S.A. which the majority over here never tire of.

How about Wendell Willkie for president?

July 9, 1940

Just a quick letter to give you my news. I had your cable about the opening, which of course thrilled me, and today a long letter in which you seemed really pleased with my message for the Studio. It made me very, very happy to know that you approved. What I said came from the very center of my heart and absolutely spontaneously. I am longing to hear about the details of the opening.

One suddenly realizes how many people have been absorbed into the military or war machine since I got back from tour. I have been so busy settling business matters I have had no evening to see anyone. Tonight I decided to 'phone someone to dine with me and after an hour's telephoning, I found that not one of my male contemporaries was available. In the last months, as you may know, seven thousand people have joined the forces each

day. Nearly all the girls I know are V.A.D.'s or taking the men's places in the civilian services of government departments.

There are now two plays left in London. There is no cross-road anywhere without brick machine-gun emplacements. This island really is a fortress; gradually civilian living will completely stop. The spirits of everyone are really remarkable. All ages manage to joke still about invasion and air raids. L— has had some awful doings with air raids, yet she still laughs. The only thing which is really worrying everyone is the Fifth Column problem, which was entirely responsible for the fall of France. Churchill is doing the most magnificent work. If we have to live under present conditions, thank God for that man!

The tragedy of France is unmentionable. When history is written about the French Government these last two months, the intrigues that Shakespeare wrote of in *Richard III* and *King John* will be nothing to the ghastly tragedy in the French political system, and if we can prevent that's happening here, then all is well.

It is an incredible experience living here these days. The face of the towns and the fields seem utterly different. People are altered utterly, people one has known for years. There is still gayety, still

laughter, yet it comes and goes quickly. There is an eager purposefulness in everyone's eyes, in their walk, in their talk. There is the feeling that every moment must be used to the full, lived to the full. This is a difficult atmosphere to live in. It is like living for week after week, month after month, at the pace you take for the last two days of rehearsal before the opening. How long people can last out I don't know. What I do think is when once battle does start again, a conclusion one way or the other won't be a matter of years. It will be decided in months. The other thing one is learning, and which gives one a renewed practical faith in a great future for the world, is that modern warfare today threatens to exterminate all life on the earth, and when this war is over and, given another twenty years' peace, no nation will ever dare to fight again. Everyone who experienced the fighting in Belgium and at Dunkirk says the same thing, that modern warfare is so utterly different in its every conception from the last war, so swift, so devastating, so uncontrollable, that if we can keep at peace for twenty years after this, we can and will never fight again. However many new inventions of destruction appear, they will be so deadly in their improvements over the ones used now that no one will ever use them. So Nobel was right—he is being

proved right in our lifetime. What will happen to poor France! Is there no morality left anywhere? When an ally has to turn to and sink an ally's ships, kill her own friends, one begins to think not! Yet it was necessary, I am afraid, for the sake of self-preservation.

I am expecting my orders daily.

14 St. Albans St., London

July 20, 1940

Your letters are so exciting I can hardly keep up with you. Often it is hard to know what to say to you, for all the happenings in my life which I would enjoy telling you about in detail do not happen any more. So much is happening all around me, and yet the individual becomes less and less important, except as an essential part of a very active machine, and it is indeed a very busy—and a very formidable—machine.

I went down last Sunday to visit my old cousin, Lady A—, who lives on the south coast in one of the many defended areas, and one realized the incredible thoroughness of our defences. It was like visiting a foreign country, and when you see the coastal defences you feel indeed as though you were in a vast, walled-in castle. What has been done over here in the last two months in its pace

and efficiency astonishes us no less than it must amaze the rest of the world.

As you say, the present lull is very ominous and I suppose that we are in for a devastating time very soon, but I believe now that we shall certainly win and win soon. I say soon, for financially neither this country nor Germany can afford years of war. Germany cannot, even with French *matériel* and French resources.

I wonder how the figures of war expenditures have made you feel. To me they recall the wealth of the world to be vaster than one's wildest exaggeration, yet the speed of spending seems equally exaggerated. Yet it is true that if the war goes on for two or three years, Europe, every country in Europe, would be in the same state of poverty as Germany in 1919, and this the leaders of Europe, I am sure, will never allow. If and when the great battle begins, we, here I think, can have very reasonable, practical faith in the outcome. If you were in England today, I am sure you would be numbed, as I am, much more by the colossal, unemotional, silent, steely preparedness than in the amount of Hitler's threats. The whole face and soul of this country has altered since France signed her armistice, and though I still abhor the thought of the ghastly slaughter and suffering I may yet see, I do

believe, with practical, unprejudiced thought, that all will be well.

I wonder how you react to Roosevelt these days. I still think that he is almost the greatest living statesman. I believe that he is the one man who will be able to do two things: first, he is the only man who can keep you out of the war and at the same time, without getting involved, he will help us with materials. He is a truly subtle statesman and he has had years of experience in office, and that alone should make people want to vote him back again.

Since I started writing this letter I hear that I am to join "me" unit on July 26th, next Friday. I am not going into the Guards but a country regiment, the Suffolk. I am grateful to know definitely when I am going. This waiting about is the worst part of it. I shall try to write as much as I can.

I long with any remaining longing that the U.S.A. stay out of this war. I do believe that Roosevelt will achieve that.

August 20, 1940

You have no conception of how little time I have to myself. It sometimes seems as if it was years since I got into my uniform, sometimes only a day ago. Actually it is over three weeks now and the days have gone rather slowly and wearily. I am having

my training with the Suffolk Regiment, and stationed almost in the center of England in the depths of the most lovely country. Each day is the same as the last, except that each day brings longer and more strenuous hours of work.

Every morning at six o'clock I walk along the field in the chilly dawn in my shirt and trousers to shave in icy water and wash in a tin bowl; back again to my tent to clean my boots and buttons and to roll my straw mattress into a neat little bundle and breakfast at 7:10 A.M.; then parade after parade all the day long until 5:30. And now there is hardly a day when one does not have some special duty or other—peeling potatoes, night guard, digging trenches, and so on. Even on Sundays we have duties which cut across our hours off.

The one factor which keeps me going and gives me comfort is the limitless spirit of my companions. Day after day they go through this brutal routine and never lose their humor and their consideration for one another, and I am able to help them a good deal. The lame, unhappy ones are often ignored and one can comfort them and force them to laugh. There are the awkward ones who get roared at on parade. I can help them before tomorrow by showing them gently and peacefully an easy way to master their drills and their rifle move-

ments. Everyone looks to me, because they respect my education, for advice and laughter. I cannot get let down or depressed by my own thoughts. If I did, then I should be letting all those spirited, ignorant people down too. I am even beginning to be able to tell them that there are other ways of fighting than with hatred in their hearts. I am able to talk somewhat of my ideals for peace and an end of wars. All of these ideas most of them have already as hidden instincts, but they had never dared to turn to them and to turn them into practical idealisms. Because of all this I am making use even of this ghastly experience. As each day goes by, I know more strongly than ever, and more practically, the criminal waste and futility of world wars.

We are taking now the only possible course, but one can prepare the minds of the ordinary "people" to build a finer, a real world when this is all over. The comforting thing is how few, how very few, of these people enjoy or approve of war. When they talk and when you tell them they must have no fear to talk, they all say that they are fighting now only to defend their beloved homes and their tiny children. If it is possible to go on teaching them to forget their hatred, well then at the end of the war we may be nearer to our ideals of eternal peace.

I expect that I shall get my commission, when I do not know. I now believe that when that moment comes, I really can do much more to watch over the comfort and even the happiness of these men. Of course one does have greater scope in one's capacity as an officer. I absolutely believe that all of this experience that I am now having will flow out into a great and glowing usefulness when I am free again, free also to work in the theatre. Have no worry, my head is high and so is my heart. My ideals never waver from a sure certainty for the future.

August 26, 1940

It seems as if I had hardly a moment to ever write you, for, as usual, my time is wholly occupied, and now I have arranged to make it a good deal fuller. I have been in the army now for just over a month. The first month being over, they tell us that the second month is even more strenuous, so that I have arranged to organize a concert in my spare time! Now the few hours of the day I had for relaxation are used to their last and every second. The incredible loneliness of this place is so depressing at times that I felt I could not bear it if I did not do something to make it a little gayer for a few hours. I have had no leave at all since I

came here, only a few hours in a neighboring town; all the rest of the time war, war, war!

Of course it horrifies me, but what else can one do now. I am teaching many, many people not to hate so deeply and, I think too, to see that we will have a free future.

The air raids have begun; one hears gun-fire nearly every night, but with true unconcern. It still seems an extraordinary dream, but a dream, or perhaps I should say a nightmare, which no matter how long it lasts I know will never poison, alter, or embitter me. I know that to be true now.

No commission yet, but that will surely come unless there are colossal new happenings; and if it were not to come, I have found what I can do and will do, something I will be proud to do—that is, to be a stretcher-bearer. They asked for volunteers for that, as it is considered to be a dangerous job, but I know you would want me to do that if I get the chance.

I know that you, being a very active person, must be worrying and chafing against inactivity and worrying for and about me. All the comfort I can give you is that the God you and I believe in does look after and guard the people who are true to their beliefs and those who do honorably the work they know that they should do. If I get a

commission, I shall endeavor to be assigned to a job parallel to that of being a stretcher-bearer.

L— has been surrounded by air raids these last weeks, but mother writes from London that when L— came up to see her, her spirit and humor was immense in spite of the fact that the nursing home where my father died was damaged.

The damages are not basically severe, for the defences, thanks to Churchill, are very thorough. Everyone's spirits are still incredibly high, considering certain setbacks, and in many ways, out of the army, one can still wonder if there is a war going on at all. You can still get delicious meals in any town that you go to. Of course the butter and sugar rations are noticeable, but not in the least annoying. It is only the horror of the slaughter and suffering we are all causing and may cause which depresses and worries me. It seems so unthinkable that now we have to be the ones who are damaging France and Holland. The futility of warfare in this modern, closely linked world grows more clearly in my soul every day. When this war is over, which, pray God, may be very soon, I shall give every moment of my spare time, every individual second, to working for permanent, perpetual peace. All of my present experience will help me to discover a practical and convincing gospel to

bring about this way of life. Since I can say all this, while I am in England and in the army, you can never doubt that our joint ideals are growing all the time in strength and stature. I am absolutely unmoved by German or our own propaganda. I think I still see and find the truth, the true stark situation, and, seeing it, I still think that in the end those who remain alive will be able to create a greater world, a nobler civilization out of what may be little else but wreckage. But the little will be very pure and greatly prized. We could all of us in Europe, we may even, be able to end the war without much more wreckage; if not, the little will be there and it must be sensed and guarded jealously and with pride, for eternity makes one lifetime seem very insignificant, and also each lifetime helps to make up eternity. God bless you, all of you.

Friday, September 13, 1940

When I finish this letter who knows, but I am going to start it anyway, and surely with a week-end ahead I should be able to write a good deal. I am writing it sitting on the bare floor of a huge, Victorian room, a room which used to be the impressive billiard room of this grotesque Victorian mansion. Now it is empty except for moth-eaten stag-heads on the walls. The windows are heavily

shuttered, and on the floor is a worn yet richly patterned carpet. The furniture consists of bare trestle tables, benches, and our heavy blankets spread on the floor around the four walls. By each "bed" lies a loaded rifle, a tin hat, and equipment!

The room is filled with the night guard. At one table four soldiers are playing dominoes; in a corner a group are singing, or shouting, the songs of the last war to the accompaniment of a mouth organ; in another corner two more soldiers are having a friendly brawl. The conversation is very loud; although the ceiling is high above us and the room is vast, you can hardly see your neighbor for tobacco smoke. Lorries wait outside, in which we may be sent to any point in the country if an invasion should begin, and all over this tiny island tonight, in ancient houses, in tents, in barracks, in the woods, and by the sand dunes, there are similar gatherings, all with their rifles by their blankets. In this atmosphere I write to you.

To me it is still an unreality, despite the ghastly bombings of London, with the knowledge that any hour I might hear that my flat and belongings no longer exist. I can never realize that human beings can be so crazy as to destroy deliberately themselves, one another, their homes, the whole background of their civilization, their endeavor which

has taken thousands of years to evolve. With the sure realization that at any hour Germans may appear in the very fields where I have been training, in the very group of trees where I was sheltered from a September shower only yesterday, I can find no trace of hatred or bitterness against any person or people who are causing this misery, this upheaval of sorrow and suffering in our lives. I can only feel a shamed horror that man can discover no practical remedy to end this futile self-inflicted misery. One can only go over one's already firm and fixed beliefs and convictions. One can only realize more fully that there is no limit to the number of times one's heart can be broken and can bleed for the suffering of other people. As long as one's heart can still bleed, no hatred towards any nation or persons can ever exist. I know now that I can go through this war, however long it may last, without discovering any trace of hatred in my soul, for it is only because the masses of ordinary people have been kept in wilful ignorance that war can occur. If only true democracy existed, there could never be a war. Of course we are not ready for democracy, but we could have been, even by today, if every walk of life had desired each individual to possess knowledge and be capable of individual, intelligent thought and judgment. But

we, who prefer to believe in democracy, in communism, in national socialism, whatever you like, had decided that the chosen, educated few should possess the knowledge, the power, the judgment, and when we possessed those things we knew how great our power was and how easily we could make the majority act according to our will. They did not have to think or use their hearts and souls to decide their own destinies. They read, listened, and obeyed. You have to be educated to have faith, to know the exquisite emotion which the sight of the stars, the fields, or a river may cause. You must be given the opportunity of having self-respect and a noble pride in order to have a love of all people, a truer judgment of what is right or wrong. All these things have been denied to so many, the majority in this world, and so a few people in a few countries can bring unspeakable tragedy into the center of our own precious proportion of what you and I believe to be part of an eternal pattern. This may sound something like an inclination towards communism. It is far from it! I only know that by being with the ordinary people here I am learning so much. I am learning how few people in any country want war or wish to hate. If they are taught in ignorance to hate, they will hate; if

they are shown how to love, they can love with all of their divine hearts.

I walked with two London men one night here, beneath the stars, and as we reached the lake, I remarked how much happiness I could get from seeing the stars reflected in the still water. All they had seen all of their lives were roofs of houses, peeling with age and soot. One of them looked shyly at the stars and then at the lake, and because I had seen the beauty there, he began to see it too. That experience, and others like it, make me retain my courage and my faith, my firm hope. All my sadness is that we cannot end this war and show the beauty and glory of living to people without the danger of annihilation always in a distant corner of their poor hearts. Already many of the men here have had their homes in the East End of London blown to bits, yet their courage remains infinite and undisturbed. Nothing that I can imagine will ever break their spirit. What has formed that spirit I cannot fathom. Perhaps it is a degree of stoical suffering that they have always had rather near them, suffering such as you and I have rarely known. Not long ago I believed that if London were ever demolished, the war would end. I no longer believe that. I believe that because of the

ordinary people in this country, this country will never crack in spirit or resolve. But why, *Oh Why*, cannot the spirit be used creatively rather than abortively? One can say that no such courageous spirit is wasted or in vain. That is true, but every day I realize what an inestimable nobility there is in the spirit of man, and so it angers and worries me deeply that that spirit is only tested and noticed through experiences of suffering. If only everyone could really learn the truth of ideals and dreams! If only they could be shown that the real glory of life is the inevitable—the clouds, the sun bowing his exit to the moon, an unconscious act of kindness to someone you imagine you hate; and, if having found the knowledge of these things, they could retain it, then the future of living in this world would indeed be more glorious than ever before. Pray God we can retain what we are learning now for the moment when this horror ends.

You ask what is most needed at the moment. To my mind, the most urgent need will be from now on at the hospitals—not the Red Cross, but the civilian hospitals; for God knows they are getting full already, and, as you know, they are not state-aided over here.

I had a letter from my mother today, in which she says that she was given twenty-four hours to

evacuate from where she was staying. She was with my old cousin, Lady A—, who is desperately ill and was in the hospital after a colossal operation. Mother got an ambulance and was ready to leave as she wrote to me, but she had no idea where she would go. Her's is one case in many thousands, yet she writes, as does everyone, that nowhere is there panic or any thought of personal danger.

I am very well, but of course I am unutterably weary, for every day as I get more fully trained I have longer hours and harder duties, but as I have greater intelligence than these men from the slums, with which to cope, nothing so far has made me complain or despair. I have had such infinite privileges, comforts, and happiness that now I must somehow take on some responsibilities for the happiness of other people. I owe so much to life for what life has given me and is still giving me. I intend to live as long as I may in order to give something back to life.

I imagine I am getting a commission in about a month. You shall know the moment I know myself.

I had a letter from you yesterday in which you said you noticed a Stratford postmark. You were right. We are quite near to Stratford, and on the few days when we are given a few hours' leave I

go into that town. In Stratford it is still impossible to believe that the country is involved in total war. The theatre is surrounded now by high trees, the swans are on the river, and people pass you in their glistening, varnished punts. Shakespeare's house is untouched, almost undisturbed, and you can find tiny ancient gardens behind the old houses where you can experience the luxury of peaceful dreaming. It is an existence of sharp contrasts all the time—days of drilling and tearing about with machine guns and tank guns, days of turning peaceful fields with cows grazing in them into imaginary battle-fronts, long nights with no moon, with hundreds of soldiers lying in ditches and forests, listening for imaginary enemies, feeling the dew settling on their hands and in their hair as the dawn comes. Days when the sky is full of planes—bombers returning from raids over Germany and fighters screaming through the clouds after German planes which have been reported somewhere over this island. Then, suddenly, the sky is clear for a day. You find yourself walking along a bordered country lane, with the farmers gathering in the corn behind the hedges, and finally the seclusion of a Stratford garden. I shall value above price every moment of every hour when this is all over. May I never again waste one of the precious moments we are all

given! We are given so many in a lifetime, yet so few when one realizes what even one lifetime can leave behind it.

Please keep my letters. When I get home to you again, maybe we will read them together, then we can eliminate the false things from them.

Tomorrow is my birthday. A year ago we were together at East Hampton. This year I am quite alone here amongst five hundred soldiers. I think of everyone I know and love in America every day and every night. You say you are proud of me, but why? The big and terrible situations are always the easiest to face. When your world seems as if it might crash, it is easy to try and stop it! When life is peaceful and placid, then is the difficulty, for then you can so easily waste life. Do not let anyone waste their peacefulness, for if you can do big and great things during peaceful times, the accomplishment should be immense.

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